

A man with a full beard and glasses, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and black tie. He is gesturing with his hands, one raised palm forward and the other pointing towards his chest. The background is a textured grey wall.

Demystifying the Concept of Brand

It's all about the promise...

Do you know what a brand is? Is it a logo? Is it a product? Is it a personality? This article separates the concept of brand from the act of branding to give you a clear picture about what a brand is, why you need one, and how to use it.

Are you struggling to create a brand for your business?

Do you feel you should know how to do it, but fumble with execution?

What if I told you there are only three things to know to create a winning brand?

1. Forget everything you think you know about brands.
2. Make a promise.
3. Honor your promise.

Many people, including quite a few marketing professionals, think that a brand is a product, logo, or color scheme, but that's not accurate.

Your product, logo, and color scheme are important parts of your branding package, but don't define it.

The concept of a brand is nebulous and exasperating. We could even make a comparison to pornography in the sense that it's

hard to explain what it looks like, but we all know it when we see it.

It's Not All About Logos

In a 2002 article in Digital Output magazine, Jason Miletsky said, "A brand is intangible - it's an inherent promise made by the company to the consumer that reflects what the consumer can expect in terms of overall quality upon making a purchase."

Your products may be shining examples of what your business sells, and your logo may be how customers identify you in a crowded market, but your brand differentiates you from the competition.

Your brand tells the world what it can expect from your organization in terms of quality and experience.

When you look at it this way, the concept of a brand is simple.

Your brand should touch every facet of your organization...

The Promise

Your brand is your promise.

It sets an expectation and commits to deliver a specific experience.

- BMW
- Apple
- Harley Davidson

Each of these companies has a distinct brand that reaches beyond the concept of car, computer, and motorcycle.

They speak about lifestyle, quality, and experience.

You know right away what to expect because their central message, enhanced by their products,

logos, and presentation, elicits an expectation and follows through on it.

What image comes to mind when you think about BMW?

Exclusive, executive, clean, modern, stylish, powerful, reliable.

Everything BMW does from the almost boutique set up of their factory, to the showroom, their advertising, and their final product exemplifies these ideas.

Now think about Ford. At some point, we've all heard someone say that FORD is an acronym for Found On Road Dead.

Ford brought us the Model-T, and classics

like Thunderbirds and Mustangs. (I think T-Birds lost their way long before I was born, but once upon a time they were the cat's meow.) How did Ford go from being an industry leader and innovator to becoming the butt of jokes?

They broke their promise.

Somewhere in the 1980s, Ford Motor Company hit a bad patch and went off-brand by releasing a few less-than-stellar cars marketed to a different audience.

Even today, in a world that embraces electric cars and SUVs, the two Ford products that consistently rank

well are the ones that stay true to their brand.

Ford F-150s are often in the top five trucks lists and Mustangs will always have a certain cachet. Both products are solid and manly and reflect Ford's original concept of building affordable vehicles that would appeal to middle-class men.

Consistency Is Key

It's very easy to craft a grand statement that looks good on paper, but people will judge your brand on your consistency and adherence to that statement across all aspects of your business.

- Products & Services
- Customer

The difference between brand and branding is that your brand is a promise of what people can expect when they work with you and branding is how you package it.

Relationships

- Community Partners

Everything your business does has to resonate with your brand.

For example, a company that promotes itself as ethical and green can't use child labor and dump chemicals in local waterways.

If your brand embraces family values, then make sure that it embodies family values at every level of the organization.

Your brand is the essence of your business. It's your

promise to every person who connects with you. Every action, every policy, and every employee from the janitor to the CEO should personify that promise.

It sounds like a lot of effort for something that flies in the face of internet wisdom, but once you embrace the concept, it is easy to put into practice. ✓

